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# THE ISSUE

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The Case for Sinn Fein

BY

LECTOR

AS PASSED BY CENSOR.

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# THE ISSUE

## INDEPENDENCE.

Does Ireland wish to be free? Do we alone among the ancient Nations of Europe desire to remain slaves? That, and that alone, is the question which every Irish elector has now to answer. Let us put everything else out of our minds as irrelevant claptrap. Let nothing distract us from this single issue of Liberty. We must turn a deaf ear to sentimental whining about what this or that man did, his length of service, his "fighting on the floor of the House," and so on. Whatever may have been done in the way of small doles, petty grants, and big talk, the fact is that we are not Free and the **issue** is, Do we want to be Free?

Why should we be afraid of Freedom? Would any sane adult voluntarily prefer to be a slave, to be completely in the control and power of another? Men do not willingly walk into jail; why, then, should a whole people? The men who are **afraid** of national liberty are unworthy even of personal liberty; they are the victims of that slave mentality which English coercion and corruption have striven to create in Ireland. When Mr. John Dillon, grown tremulous and garrulous and feeble, asked for a national convention this autumn "to definitely forswear an Irish Republic," he was asking Ireland to commit an act of national apostasy and suicide. Would **you** definitely forswear your personal freedom? Will Mr. John Dillon hand his cheque-book and property over to some stranger and indenture himself as a serf or an idiot? When he does, but not till then, we shall believe that the Irish Nation is capable of sentencing itself cheerfully to penal servitude for all eternity.

It was not always thus. "I say deliberately," said Mr. John Dillon at Moville in 1904, "that I should never have dedicated my life as I have done to this great struggle, if I did not see at the end of it the crowning and consummation of our work—**A FREE AND INDEPENDENT IRELAND.**" It is sad that, fourteen years later, when the end is in sight, Mr. Dillon should be found a recreant and a traitor to his past creed. The degeneration of such a man is a damning indictment of Westminsterism.

Parnell, too, save for one short moment when he tried by compromise to fool English Liberalism but was foiled, proclaimed his belief in Irish Independence.

This is what Parnell said at Cincinnati on 23rd February, 1880:—

"When we have undermined English misgovernment, we have paved the way for Ireland to take her place among the nations of the earth. And let us not forget that that is the ultimate goal at which all we Irishmen aim. None of us, whether we be in America or in Ireland, or wherever we may be, will be satisfied until we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England."

Were he alive to-day, when the last link is snapping, on what side would Parnell be? Would he forswear an Irish Republic or would he proclaim once more, as he said in Cork (21st Jan., 1885): "No man has a right to fix the boundary of the march of a Nation. No man has a right to say: Thus far shalt thou go and no farther. And we have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland's nation-hood and we never shall."

## IRELAND AND SMALL NATIONS.

At New York 31st August, 1904, John Redmond declared:—

“If it were in my power to-morrow by any honourable means to absolutely emancipate Ireland, I would do it and feel it my duty to do it. (1904, not 1914!) I believe it would be just as possible for Ireland to have a prosperous and free separate existence as a nation as Holland, Belgium, or Switzerland, or other small nationalities. And if it were in the power of any man to bring that result about to-morrow by honourable and brave means, he would be indeed a coward and a traitor to the traditions of his race did he not do so.”

If Holland and Poland and all the other little lands, why not Ireland? Put that straight question to yourself and you must answer it as John Redmond did in 1904. Are we alone among the nations created to be slaves and helots? Are we so incompetent and incapable as not to be able to manage our own country? Is a people of four millions to be in perpetual bondage and tutelage to a solicitor and a soldier? Did God Almighty cast up this island as a sandbank for Englishmen to walk on? Is it the sole mission of Irish men and women to send beef and butter to John Bull?

Look at the other nations and ask yourself, Why not? Why is not Ireland free? Are we too small in area? We are double Switzerland or Denmark, nearly three times Holland or Belgium. Is our population too small—though it was once double? We are as numerous as Serbia, our population is as large as that of Switzerland and nearly double that of Denmark or Norway. Does the difficulty lie in our poverty? Are we too poor to exist as a free people? The revenue raised **per head** in Ireland is double that of any other small nation, seven times that of Switzerland! The total revenue of Ireland is ten times that of Switzerland, three times that of Norway, four times that of Denmark, Serbia or Finland. Yet all these countries have their own armies, consuls, etc.; they run themselves as free nations at far below the cost of servile Ireland. Why? Because there is no other country pocketing their cash.

Here are some figures:—

		Area (thousands of sq. miles)	Population (Millions)	Revenue (Millions £)
Ireland	...	32 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	30
Belgium	...	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	32
Holland	...	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{3}{4}$
Denmark	...	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
Norway	...	125	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	10
Switzerland	...	16	4	3
Rumania	...	53 $\frac{1}{2}$	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	24
Serbia	...	34	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
Finland	...	126	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	8 $\frac{1}{2}$

These figures would suggest that Ireland is a strong military and naval power among the small nations. And so we are—only the army and navy we support are not our own; they exist to keep us in slavery, not in freedom. It is about time we started business on our own.

## DEPENDENT ON ENGLAND?

The most significant instance of English policy in Ireland is the creation of the widespread delusion that we are economically dependent on England. An elaborate network of fraud and deceit has been built

up to hide the truth from our eyes. We are secretly and systematically robbed and we hardly notice it. The ordinary Irish worker pays at least four shillings a week to England, he is hardly aware of the fact, so nicely is it done whenever he buys tobacco or his wife gets tea and sugar, and so on. Though the average income in England is three times what it is in Ireland, the notoriously underfed Irish workers have to pay more than twice the English proportion of indirect taxes on food, etc. We pay England 1/- on every pound of tea, 1½d. on every pound of sugar, 7d. on every oz. of tobacco. There is no fuss about it: it is accepted as part of the laws of nature that tea should be a shilling a pound dearer than it need be. As for direct taxation—well, even the farmers know what the English income-tax is. Where does it all go? To England as taxes, profits, rents, imperial contributions, and trade. As a going concern Ireland is now worth thirty million a year to its owner, John Bull. There are certain expenses of administration—police, Castle, secret service, prisons, tax collectors—and there are, of course, several items of hush-money, dodges necessary to fool the people, such as “education.” But the fact is that a bigger and bigger profit is being made every year out of this island. More agricultural materials and products are shipped to England, more Irish brains are selected for running India, etc., more Irishmen are utilised for gun-fodder. Sometimes, after much beseeching by resolutions and deputations, we are graciously presented with a minute fraction of our own goods. Is it not about time that we recognised in English “grants” our own country’s transmuted plunder? We are as dependent on England as a factory is on an absentee society lady who is shareholder.

In 1663 began the long series of English laws against Irish trade. Charles II. closed the English markets to Irish cattle, meat, leather, butter, etc. Ireland built ships and opened direct trade with Flanders, France, Spain, the American Colonies. The Navigation Act and the Jacobite War once more destroyed our mercantile marine and ruined our industries. Ireland was practically confined by law to the English market. In 1782, 60,000 Volunteers, with arms in their hands, won Free Trade—i.e., the liberty of Ireland to trade direct with the world. In a few years, bad as our own Parliament was, the country prospered exceedingly. The Union once more destroyed our industries and even our tillage and turned Ireland into a cattle-ranch; our mercantile marine was destroyed. All our trade is in the hands of English middlemen and we have to sell and buy at England’s price. We are dependent on England, not in the sense that we get anything out of her, but in the sense that we have allowed her to capture our trade and cut us off from the world. We have allowed England to become a parasitic bloodsucker. And because we have done so, we fancy that England is our sole customer. As if the whole world is not clamouring for meat and butter and other foodstuffs! In 1912, when England placed her cattle embargo on Ireland, the prices in the markets of Hamburg and Genoa—after deducting import duty and the extra cost of transit—were more than 11/- per cwt. higher than the price paid in England. Had Irishmen then had enough Sinn Fein spirit, they would soon have discovered who was dependent on whom!

There is no possible argument, moral or economic, against Irish freedom. “Is Ireland fit to be an independent sovereign nation?” asks Dr. Cohalan, Bishop of Cork. “Why should it not be, if Belgium is fit to be a sovereign nation, if Serbia is so fit, if Montenegro—whose King is not much more than a strong farmer in this country—is fit, all fit to be independent nations? Then, when putting the question as to Ireland, I would really ask everyone, men and women, in this country to cease speaking slightlyingly of their own race and their own country. I would like every Irishman and woman, Catholic and Protestant, to answer that question in the affirmative.” We are fit to be free, we have a God-given right to be free, we mean to be free. But how are we going to get our freedom?

## HOW TO GET THINGS.

Let us see how we ever got anything from England. Parnell is much quoted just now. What was his view? This is what he said at Manchester, 15th July, 1877:—

“ For my part I must tell you that I do not believe in a policy of conciliation of English feeling or English prejudices. I believe that you may go on trying to conciliate English prejudice until the day of judgment, and that you will not get the breadth of my nail from them. What did we ever get in the past by trying to conciliate them? Did we get the abolition of tithes by the conciliation of our English taskmasters? No; it was because we adopted different measures. Did O’Connell in his time gain emancipation for Ireland by conciliation? I rather think that O’Connell in his time was not of a very conciliatory disposition, and that at least during a part of his career he was about the best-abused Irishman living.”

There is no mistaking the view of Charles Stewart Parnell. Two years later he repeated his assertion (Tipperary, 21st Sept., 1879):—

“ **It is no use relying upon the Government, it is no use relying upon the Irish members, it is no use relying upon the House of Commons.** You must rely upon your own determination, that determination which has enabled you to survive the famine years and to be present here to-day; and, if you are determined, I tell you, you have the game in your own hands.”

And at the St. Patrick’s Day celebration in London in 1884:—

“ I have always endeavoured to teach my countrymen, whether at home or abroad, the lesson of **self-reliance**. . . . Do not rely upon any English Party; do not rely even upon the great English democracy, however well-disposed they may be to your claims. But rely upon yourselves.”

Sinn Fein means self-reliance.

According to Parnell, then, the Irish people secured nothing through Irish talk at Westminster. Whatever they got, they got by direct action. It is easy to convince ourselves that Parnell is right. We got Free Trade and legislative independence in 1782, without any Irish Party at Westminster, with the help of 60,000 Volunteers. In 1829 Catholic Emancipation was won by O’Connell in Clare, before he ever set foot in Westminster, because he had the Irish people and the Catholic Association behind him. Yet a few months before the English Government had rejected a Catholic Relief Bill with scorn. Here are Peel’s words:—

“ In the course of the last six months, England, being at peace with the whole world, has had five-sixths of the infantry force of the United Kingdom occupied in maintaining the peace and in police duties in Ireland. I consider the state of things which requires such an application of military force much worse than open rebellion. If this be the state of things at present, let me implore of you to consider what would be the condition of England in the event of war. Can we forget in reviewing the state of Ireland what happened in 1782?”

The Prime Minister was evidently unmoved by all the eloquent appeals for justice to Irish Catholics; he moved very rapidly when Irishmen showed signs of **doing** something. The Duke of Wellington, in May, 1829, made a similar confession:—

"If you glance at the history of Ireland during the last ten years, you will find that agitation really means something short of rebellion; that and no other is the exact meaning of the word. It is to place the country in that state in which its government is utterly impracticable except by means of an overawing military force."

Not such a far cry after all from the Iron Duke to the Tin Viscount!

Tithes were abolished in 1838, again not by a Parliamentary Party, but by the people themselves after a bloody seven years' war.

Then came Disestablishment in 1869. How did that come? When in 1868 Gladstone proposed his Church resolution, a hundred Irish members voted—fifty-five for and forty-five against! Obviously Disestablishment was not carried by Irish representation at Westminster. Let Gladstone himself tell us what carried it:—

"Down to the year 1865 and the dissolution of that year, the whole question of the Irish Church was dead. Nobody cared about it, nobody paid attention to it in England. Circumstances occurred which drew attention of the people to the Irish Church. I said myself in 1865, and I believed, that it was out of the range of practical politics."

In other words, Fenianism secured Irish Church Disestablishment. Lord Derby, writing from the opposite camp, agreed with Gladstone:—

"A few desperate men, applauded by the whole body of the Irish people for their daring, showed England what Irish feeling really was, made plain to us the depth of a discontent whose existence we had scarcely suspected, and **the rest followed, of course.**"

Let us hear the same two unimpeachable witnesses concerning the Land Question. "I must make one admission," said Gladstone, "and that is that without the Land League the Act of 1881 would not at this moment be on the Statute Book." "Fixity of tenure," said Lord Derby, "has been the direct result of two causes: Irish outrage and parliamentary obstruction. The Irish know it as well as we. Not all the influence and eloquence of Mr. Gladstone would have prevailed on the English House of Commons to do what has been done in the matter of Irish tenant right, if the answer to all objections had not been ready: How else are we to govern Ireland?" In plain English, every concession wrung from England has been secured simply by making the English Government otherwise impossible in Ireland.

## THE FAILURE OF PARLIAMENTARIANISM.

If this be so, what is the use of sending Irishmen over to talk at Westminster? That is the question which we have to face squarely. In the hand of a genius like Parnell, the parliamentary policy secured a temporary success, because, with the help of Joe Biggar, the Fenian, he played the game in his own way—by parliamentary obstruction—and because he secured the co-operation of the anti-parliamentary Nationalists. But even he only looked upon the experiment as a temporary expedient. "Have patience with me," he said to a Fenian in 1877; "give me a trial for three or four years; then if I cannot do anything, I will step aside." He made a very striking declaration in November, 1880, when the freedom of Limerick was conferred on him:—

I am not one of those who believe in the permanence of an Irish Party in the English Parliament. I feel convinced that sooner or later the influence which every English Government has at its command—the powerful and demoralising influence—sooner or later—will sap the best Party you can return to the House of

Commons. I don't think we ought to rely too much on the permanent independence of an Irish Party sitting at a distance from their constituencies and legislating, or attempting to legislate, for Ireland at Westminster. But I think it possible to maintain the independence of our Party by great exertions and by great sacrifices on the part of the constituencies of Ireland—while we are making a short, sharp, and I trust decisive, struggle for the restoration of our legislative independence."

There could not be a more striking condemnation of Westminsterism from the lips of Ireland's greatest parliamentary leader. What would he not have said could he have foreseen the Liberal alliance, the pledge-breaking, the jobbing, the £400 a year! "If the young men of Ireland have trusted me," said Parnell at Kilkenny, December, 1890, "it is because they know that I am not a mere Parliamentarian." Ireland, young and old, has since then had good cause to distrust mere Parliamentarianism.

The test of any policy is its practical result. What has Westminsterism got for us? For 47 years we have had an Irish Party, for 118 years Ireland has been represented in the English Parliament. We have given the experiment a fair trial; it is high time to take stock. When the Party started in 1871 our population was  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions; since then over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  millions have emigrated; there are now only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions in the country. In 1871 there were 5,620,000 acres in tillage; now there are less than 4,900,000. In 1871 the poor rate was 2s. 6d. per head, now it is over 5s. In 1871 the taxation of Ireland was £1 5s. 7d. per head; to-day it is about £7. Apply any rational test you like, and find if you can any single good we have got by sending Irish talkers to Westminster. The Irish Party, of course, attribute everything to themselves. But this electioneering dodge—never used by Parnell—is getting a trifle thin. Even Mr. Redmond wrote in 1902: "Despite the efforts made by Isaac Butt and other Irish members between 1871 and 1876, nothing was done in the direction of land reform until the Land League came." The Local Government Act of 1898 was drafted secretly by the Government and came as a surprise to the Party; it was even opposed by John Redmond. The Party never asked for Old Age Pensions, and when these were proposed they confined themselves to the remark that if extended to Ireland half-a-crown a week would be enough. Parliament has spent thirty-three years drafting Home Rule Bills; they have all come to nothing. In three weeks Irish Conscription was passed in spite of the Party. Where was Conscription defeated—in Ireland or in Westminster? And if the organised opposition and resistance of the Nation, especially of Labour, made Conscription impossible, does it not teach us that our real power is here at home in Ireland? The Party made vain efforts to secure justice for the Irish teachers. The teachers took the matter into their own hands and won at once; had they been more determined, they would have done better still. In 1847-48, while Irishmen talked in Parliament, Mitchel proposed to do something here in Ireland, to keep our own food here for our own people. Ireland did not realise her true salvation then, and the consequences were terrible. Seventy years later the same gospel is being preached under a new name. Are we going to listen to-day?

Why, indeed, argue against Parliamentarianism at all? Its very adherents have abandoned all defence of it. On 3rd December, 1917, Mr. Dillon said in the English House of Commons: "Our position in this House is made futile, we are never listened to." Next day Mr. Devlin declared: "I do not often come to this House, because I do not believe it is worth coming to." These men are merely re-echoing from their own experience the parting words of Michael Davitt as he left the English Parliament (Oct., 1899):—

.. I have for four years tried to appeal to the sense of justice in this House of Commons on behalf of Ireland. I leave, convinced that no just cause, no cause of right, will ever find support from this House of Commons unless it is backed up by force."

### THE FUTILITY OF TALK.

Let us consider the whole policy in a sane, business-like way. John Bull runs his Other Island purely as a lucrative investment; he makes a good profit by the concern. Ireland is simply an Area for supplying beef and mutton, oats and butter, timber and men. We, Irish men and women, exist merely to be exploited. Well, we know it; what have we done? How have we striven to oust this big profiteer who sweats and coerces us? We were once an independent concern, we managed our own affairs. Then John Bull annexed us; by means of bribes and promises and threats he turned out the Irish directors. Arrangements were made by which 100 Irishmen were admitted to the English Employers' Federation 600 strong. And for 118 years these Irishmen have been talking there, making speeches and petitions and harangues. And we? What have we been doing? Oh, yes, now and then the Irish—that is, John Bull's workingmen—got restive and made things unpleasant. So they got some concessions: Emancipation, Land Acts, etc. But still they always turned again to talk; with 80 Irishmen talking to 600 Englishmen they were told that they would be quite safe. Weren't we "represented" at Westminster? Whenever these, our representatives, definitely proposed anything, they were, of course, beaten; but if the majority against them was less than 200, they always raised a deafening cheer. It is so nice to be beaten by only 150, whereas if we were not "represented" we should be beaten by 230—which would be dreadful. Then we were told that what was said in Parliament reached the world—as if Mr. King had not told more truth about us in Parliament than the whole Irish Party, as if Hansard is not censored, as if Dr. McCartan, Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington and others have not said more in America than twenty Westminsters could convey—not to mention T. P. O'Connor's performances! To what depths are we reduced, when Westminsterism is excused only as a means of getting into Hansard!

Do we really think that a handful of Irishmen by merely talking can persuade eight times their number of Englishmen to take their grip off this country, to cease exploiting us, to give up their fat profits? Is it not, to say the least, more likely that the English majority, far cleverer and more powerful, will succeed in cajoling, bribing and fooling the few Irish flies who walk into the spiders' parlour? **In fact, was not the Act of Union specially designed for this very purpose?** To swallow a powerless Irish minority in an English Parliament, to give them facilities for talking and letting off steam that thereby the Irish people might be beguiled into doing nothing else. By providing a sham outlet for our energies, by diverting our attention into wordy warfare, the English Parliament has succeeded for 118 years in preventing us from seeing the obvious truth that the English Government can only be made unworkable **in Ireland.**

The very genius of Parnell has done us harm by intensifying the illusion. He succeeded for a while, where Butt failed, because he adopted unparliamentary methods in Parliament. For a time, by persistent obstruction, Parnell made Government unworkable, even in England. He was beaten in the end; obstruction is no longer possible: we have reverted to the mock debates of Isaac Butt. Things are even much worse: for the whole Party system has made Parliament a fraud and a farce. The House of Commons has lost its independence to a caucus which controls the jobs and the party funds. The latest development, whereby Messrs. Lloyd George and Bonar Law have arranged to wipe out the Opposition, makes the further presence of a few Irish Nationalists a jocose anachronism.

The English Coalition would, however, still like the eighty Irishmen to come and hobnob with them. England is far keener on their attendance than Ireland ever was. Those who oppose the Westminster policy are mostly in English prisons; absenteeism is treason felony. English aeroplanes drop leaflets printed (at our expense) by the English Government to denounce "the policy of abstention, to show that it is folly. The English foreign propaganda tirelessly advertises the presence of Mr. Dillon and Co. in Westminster as the surest proof of England's kindness to us, and of Irish loyalty to the Empire. The Irish Party think that their attendance is good for Ireland, the English Government is quite certain that it is good for England, everyone agrees that it cannot be good for both. Which, do you think, knows the situation best: the English Government, whose policy of exploiting us has been hitherto so eminently successful, or the Irish Party which has been so often taken in, outwitted, bribed and duped? It is worth pondering over.

### THE ALTERNATIVE.

Undoubtedly in most minds the great objection to the Abstention Policy is that it seems a mere negation; it seems to leave a horrible blank. What! No Irish Representatives at Westminster? Are we to allow Carson to represent us? And so on. Let us look at the thing calmly. Why do we want to be "represented" at all? We must first answer that question. For instance, we have no desire to be "represented" in Timbuctoo or in the Moon; but some Irish people find it consoling to feel that they are represented in England. If not, they feel something dreadful will happen: the income-tax will be trebled, we shall all be coerced and conscripted. Well, as things have hitherto been, the Irish Party have never succeeded in staving off a penny of our taxation. Twenty-four years ago an Anglo-Irish Commission found that England was plundering Ireland of two and three-quarter millions a year in excess of the amount of plunder sanctioned by the Union. From that day to this we have never secured the remission of one penny of this plunder; on the contrary, it has been increased tenfold. And all this time we have been strongly "represented" at Westminster. We have been paying heavily for the privilege! As for coercion—did the Party ever prevent it? For years past they might have got the Crimes Act abolished, they didn't or couldn't. Conscription was passed swiftly in spite of our "representatives"—but somehow it did not come off. Now, that is worth thinking on. Conscription, like Coercion Acts and Budgets, danced through our representatives, yet we ourselves beat it. How? By electing our own little parliament in Dublin (we called it the Mansion House Conference, of course, for decency's sake), by voting taxes to it (we called them the Defence Fund), by organising the country so effectively that the English-made law was seen to be impossible and unworkable. What an object-lesson if only we will learn from it. The anti-conscription campaign is Sinn Fein in a nutshell. Even the Party developed a momentary backbone; the members came back to Erin and actually left us "unrepresented" in London—and we hardly noticed the dreadful fact!

The Abstention Policy means, therefore, that we give up the sham battle and take up the real struggle in grim earnest. We cease to rely on talk as an effective economic or political defence, we begin to DO something, to rely on ourselves. There is only one way of putting an end to English tyranny in Ireland, and that is, not by scolding at it from the other side of the Irish Sea, but by making it unworkable over here.

Do we mean the use of physical force? This is a difficulty which at once arises in discussing the abstention policy. This is chiefly due to

the hysterical asseveration of Mr. John Dillon, whose chief electioneering argument—apart from abuse—is that the only alternative to Westminster is Rebellion. It seems rather curious, doesn't it, that we cannot sit tight here in our own country and win independence as Hungary did under Deak. But perhaps Mr. Dillon means that if we were not distracted and bamboozled by the fighting on the floor of the House, we would not so tamely acquiesce in our oppression; and probably Mr. Dillon is right. But, after all, conscription was beaten without rebellion, and Mr. Dillon's adherence (however lukewarm) to the Mansion House Committee showed that he believed it could be beaten without physical force. And when Mr. Dillon signed the No-Rent Manifesto he was, though he knew it not, a staunch upholder of Sinn Fein:—

“Against the passive resistance of an entire population, military power has no weapons. . . . No power on earth except faint-heartedness on your own part, can defeat you. . . . The world is watching to see whether all your splendid hopes and noble courage will crumble away at the first threat of a cowardly and tyrannical. . . . Stand together in the face of the brutal and cowardly enemies of your race. . . . Stand passively, firmly, fearlessly by, while the armies of England may be engaged in their hopeless struggle against a spirit which their weapons cannot touch. . . . The Government will learn in a single winter, how powerless is armed force against the will of a united, determined and self-reliant nation.”

Would to God that this was the message which Mr. Dillon had for Ireland to-day! Michael Davitt's comment on the No-Rent Manifesto is interesting:—

“While I admit its great success as far as results were concerned, I think that it dulled a weapon which could have been used to give the final blow to landlordism in Ireland. Had the League waited until two or three hundred thousand tenant-farmers were ready to obey it, it would have involved the eviction of a million of people. That would have been a measure which the Government could not have faced, and the result would have been the downfall of the system of landlordism. Still, the results were immediate. The landlords offered the largest possible reduction of rents, and Mr. Gladstone offered to release the suspects and bring forward the Arrears Bill.”

There, in Davitt's words, you have the central belief of Sinn Fein: reliance on the moral solidarity and economic power of a Nation. Even a small determined minority, if prepared to suffer, can effect enormous reforms. The English Suffragettes have won the franchise for women. It was certainly not by physical force—even the militant suffragettes did not rebel, though they burnt houses, broke statues, and harried politicians. A handful of determined women made government extremely difficult and thus they won the vote **in spite of Parliament**. If such is the power of a minority, how irresistible would be an entire nation. Secure even only one million determined adherents of Sinn Fein, and in six months English government will be at an end. That is our belief, and it is based on solid facts of history—Hungarian Independence, English suffrage struggle, Irish victory over conscription. There are limits to the possibilities of brute force. At this stage of the world it is impossible to slaughter a nation, it is impossible to cope with a nation of passive resisters. What is to be done with a million or so of people who refuse to pay taxes, who combine to secure the products of their own country, who repudiate the authority of the intruders? That is the problem which England does not want to face in this country. The only way for Irishmen to secure a government based on

the consent of the governed is to withdraw all practical consent and concurrence from the present usurpation. There is no other way. To go on accepting the English government, co-operating with it as farmers, workers, tax-payers, policemen, etc., and at the same time to keep whining and petitioning—this is despicable folly.

John Bull is our boss, Ireland is his food-producing factory. The old idea of the workers was to do nothing, to form no combination, but merely to cringe for charity from their employers. That is the stage in which the Irish Party want to keep us; they are a century behind-hand. The workers now rely on themselves, on trade union organisation, on direct action; they have even lost faith in parliamentary tactics. At any rate, they never complain that they are not “represented” (by a small minority) on the Employers’ Federation! The modern Labour movement is based on self-reliance, on the power and cohesion of large numbers, on the slowly built-up economic strength of great unions. Sinn Fein is merely the transfer of this faith from Labour to Nationality. That is what we are aiming at in Ireland: the formation of One Big Union, which will ask nothing from England **until it is ready to strike**. That is the task which lies before us: the organisation of the Irish People into a National Union. We must put ourselves into the position of taking over the whole national business of Ireland. The first step is the capture of the existing organisations—the parliamentary constituencies, the county and district and municipal councils, the boards of guardians, every single body which has a share in directing the national life.

#### THE MORAL PRINCIPLE.

Even from the purely practical standpoint, the case for abstention from the Westminster talking shop would be irresistible. But there is more than that at stake. We maintain that attendance at Westminster is immoral and dishonest, it would be a national lie and apostacy. The members of the Irish Party, when seeking re-election, have always indulged in an orgy of sedition and disloyalty. They talk of Emmet and Tone, they celebrate the Manchester Martyrs, they are not afraid to speak of Ninety-Eight, they are proud of the felons of our land, they sap every moral claim of the English Government in Ireland. (Had they not done so, they would never have been elected in the past.) And then they are carried off by mail-boat and express-train, and within a few hours they swear allegiance to the English King and draw their first instalment of £400 a year. What a bastard nationalism, what a monstrous Anglo-Irish mongrel mentality! English loyalty veneered with Irish martyrs’ blood, damnable casuistry juggling with oaths and playing with rebellion, blood and thunder paid by a cheque.

Listen to what John Redmond said on 9th August, 1902:—

“Never for one single hour since the Union was passed has Ireland been a constitutionally governed country. . . . Never for one hour has the English Government of Ireland obtained the assent or approval or confidence of the people of Ireland. . . . Never for one hour since then has the English Government of Ireland rested upon anything but **naked force**. **No single reform, large or small, has ever been obtained by purely constitutional means.** . . . We submit to the English usurpation of the government of Ireland, but we do so **only because we have no adequate means of successful resistance.**”

On 4th September, 1907, John Redmond described the Act of Union, which gave him his seat in the English Parliament, as “a great criminal act of usurpation carried by violence and fraud,” which “no lapse of time and no mitigation of its details can ever make binding upon our honour or our conscience.” Resistance to this Union, he continued, is

"a sacred duty, and the methods of resistance will remain for us merely a question of expediency," physical force "would be absolutely justifiable if it were possible."

Pretty strong, is it not? The English Government is merely an alien usurper with no moral authority whatever, to be resisted and fought by every effective means. Yet how did the same John Redmond take his seat at Westminster and draw his £400 a year? By taking the following oath:—

"I, John Redmond, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his Majesty, King George V., his heirs and successors, according to law, so help me God."

And so by means of this oath of loyalty to the "unconstitutional" usurpation of "naked force," the Irish member avails himself of that "great criminal act of usurpation carried by violence and fraud," he takes his seat with men from Lancashire or Bucks, he gets his cheque.

Is this playing the game? Is it honest and honourable? If the English occupation of Ireland is immoral and tyrannical, can we swear loyalty to it? If the Act of Union is a criminal fraud, can we accept and acknowledge it, by going to Westminster? Let every lover of truth answer this question with an emphatic No! Let us as a Nation answer No with an unanimous defiant shout.

To go to Westminster is not only unpractical and futile, if it is a betrayal of the sacred cause of Irish Nationality and **it has been advertised as such by the English Government.** The great argument for deceiving the world with regard to Ireland is the presence of Irishmen in the English Parliament—why we are "over-represented" there! There is, therefore, only one way of making Ireland cease to be a "domestic" problem and of bringing it out into the full light of international affairs; and that is by making a full and final repudiation of the English Parliament. That would be an unmistakeable manifesto to the whole world, a proclamation that Ireland demands her full rights from a world which has definitely recognised the autonomy of small nationalities.

#### THE PEACE CONFERENCE.

That is how we can appeal to the Peace Conference, by fearlessly proclaiming our refusal to be swallowed up in England's Empire. There is no need, thank God, of arguing that we should strive to make the most of the Peace Conference. Even Mr. Dillon has come to admit the idea, though he is unfortunately so intent on scoring off opponents that he has tried to degrade the Conference into a contemptible set of unscrupulous Powers. Sinn Fein is in no way built exclusively on the hopes of the Peace Conference; the movement was founded by Arthur Griffith years before the war, if indeed it is not coeval with the Irish age-long struggle for freedom. Nor are we such sentimental fools as to rely merely on gush. We do indeed hope for the triumph of moral principles in international affairs, and especially we hope that democracy is coming into its rightful inheritance. But meantime we rely primarily on ourselves and our own determination. Still, we will see that no high-sounding principles shall be paraded before the world unless the voice of Ireland is heard. We will see to it that pharisaism shall be confronted by an Ireland clamouring for independence. And we shall not be friendless. Our race has power in America, in Australia. Ireland's freedom, too, is essential for the American conception of the freedom of the seas.

The issue is now before us. We are in the birth-time of big changes. Let us not lose the great chance of freedom. Let the Irish Democracy once and for all declare that Ireland is a Nation entitled to sovereign independence.

Mr. Dillon's attempt to degrade the Peace Conference to the level of the Westminster Assembly, where everything is settled by party pressure, bribes and private arrangements, is most astonishing testimony to the corrupting and demoralising influence of London on Irish members. His mind is still moving in the old rut of political trickery, huckstering and chicanery; instinctively and as the result of long experience, he reduces Ireland's claims to the condition of a man looking for a job or a vote. He regards our case not as a question of right and justice, but as one to be compromised and pared down in the good old Westminster fashion.

Something like real Democracy, however, is coming to stay. Great and sacred principles have been invoked, and the workers of the world are not going to let them be quietly buried. Nor will Ireland. We are determined to apply the acid test to these noble professions of faith. The President of the American Republic, who has espoused the cause even of little Schleswig, will be confronted with the case for an Irish Republic. There can be no League of Nations, no firm foundation of international justice, so long as Ireland is denied that freedom which Letts, Finns, Slavs and Poles have won.

On behalf of His Holiness, Cardinal Gasparri, Papal Secretary of State, issued a statement (24th August, 1918) in which we read:—

“ History teaches us that a form of government imposed by arms does not and cannot live.”

On 6th November, 1918, Pope Benedict XV. wrote to the Archbishop of Warsaw:—

“ Thanks be to God, the resurrection of Poland is now finally dawning. Now that Poland has regained her Full Independence, it is our most fervent prayer that she may once more take her place in the community of nations and resume her career as a champion of civilisation and Christianity.”

Surely our Holy Father is looking forward to the day when he can address similar congratulations to Ireland, the Island of Saints and Scholars.

Let every Irish man and woman who reads this vote for Ireland's Independence.

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**FOR THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE HONOUR OF ERIN.**



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